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COMMITTEE ON AGING

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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September 18, 2019  
Start: 10:11 a.m.  
Recess: 12:05 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Margaret S. Chin,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala  
Chaim M. Deutsch  
Ruben Diaz, Sr.  
Mathieu Eugene  
Deborah L. Rose  
Mark Treyger  
Paul A Vallone

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COMMITTEE ON AGING

A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez  
Commissioner at DFTA

Eileen Mullarkey  
Assistant Commissioner for in-home services and  
case management

Katelyn Andrews  
Director of Public Policy at LiveON New York

Molly Krakowski  
Senior Director of Government Affairs at JASA

Po-Ling Ng  
Open Door Senior Center

J.T. Falcone  
Policy Analyst and United Neighborhood Houses

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [GAVEL] Good morning. I am  
3 Council Member Margaret Chin, Chair of the Committee  
4 on Aging. Thank you all for joining us today for the  
5 Committee's oversight hearing on Protecting Seniors  
6 from the Extreme Heat and Cold.

7 This past summer was brutal, it was the hottest  
8 summer on record for our planet and July was the  
9 tenth hottest month ever recorded for our city.

10 Heat emergency pose a great risk for everyone,  
11 but especially our seniors. Seniors are more  
12 vulnerable to extreme high temperatures since their  
13 bodies are less able to regulate heat. Every year  
14 our city average 450 heat related emergency room  
15 visits, 150 heat related hospital admissions, and 13  
16 heat strokes. Many of these hospital visitors are  
17 seniors.

18 With this reality, New York City operates 500  
19 cooling centers, which are institutions and spaces  
20 that allow the public to come in for air conditioning  
21 during hot weather. The city has cooling centers as  
22 senior centers in public housing facility and public  
23 library for the public during heat emergencies.

24 These cooling centers are especially important to  
25 help protect our seniors during extreme hot

1  
2 temperatures. However, it was recently reported that  
3 many cooling centers are unreasonably far from  
4 seniors. In fact, 30 percent of seniors live more  
5 than a half-mile from cooling centers and many  
6 seniors have difficulty finding cooling centers all  
7 together. This is unacceptable. Many seniors  
8 especially those who have mobility issues may feel  
9 discouraged from going to a cooling center because  
10 it's too far. And others may opt out of going all  
11 together because cooling centers are a headache to  
12 find.

13 According to the Department for the Aging, DFTA,  
14 the majority of their 249 center seniors act as  
15 cooling centers. I understand that DFTA senior  
16 centers represent less than half of all city cooling  
17 centers, but I wanted to stress that DFTA, as our  
18 city's aging department should be our seniors loudest  
19 advocates and thus DFTA is not off the hook.

20 I would like to know how DFTA is coordinating  
21 with other city agencies to get the word out about  
22 cooling centers to older adults. How DFTA is helping  
23 to keep these cooling centers running during the heat  
24 waves and what role is DFTA playing in getting  
25 seniors to the closest cooling center.

1  
2 I also want to express my concern about seniors  
3 who live alone and maybe suffering during heat waves  
4 with no one to turn to. I want to know what the  
5 agency is doing to reach this vulnerable subsets of  
6 seniors to.

7 While the summer is coming to an end, winter is  
8 right around the corner. I'm also interested in  
9 learning how DFTA is preparing to help protect our  
10 city seniors during another possibly brutal cold  
11 season. We have heard reports from providers that  
12 many senior centers cooling, and heating system are  
13 in dire need of repairs.

14 In the Council's Fiscal 2020 Preliminary Budget  
15 Response, we call for fully funding capital needs  
16 across 255 senior centers and community centers in  
17 NYCHA's portfolio. We also call for a new expend  
18 funding stream of \$1 million to ensure rapid  
19 completion of emergency repairs to cooling and  
20 heating systems within NYCHA's development and  
21 elsewhere.

22 I look forward to hearing updates from DFTA about  
23 how much funding the agencies have used so far to  
24 help malfunctioning systems and where senior centers,  
25

1  
2 especially those at NYCHA are receiving vital repairs  
3 on their heating and cooling system.

4 Together with DFTA, the committee wants to make  
5 sure that our seniors are protected during this  
6 upcoming winter season and that we are ready to  
7 address heat waves again next summer. I would like  
8 to thank the committee staff for helping in  
9 organizing this hearing. Our Counsel Nuzhat  
10 Chowdhury; Policy Analyst Kalima Johnson; and Finance  
11 Analyst Daniel Kroop; and Finance Unit Head Dohini  
12 Sompura.

13 I would also like to thank my Legislative  
14 Director Myriam Guerra and I would like to that the  
15 Council Members of the Committee that have joined us  
16 today. Council Member Diaz and Council Member  
17 Vallone.

18 I would like to now ask our Council to administer  
19 the oath to the panel.

20 COUNCIL CLERK: Please raise your right hand. Do  
21 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
22 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this  
23 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member  
24 questions?

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Welcome Commissioner again,  
3 your second hearing?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Good morning. Good  
5 morning Chairwoman Chin and members of the Aging  
6 Committee. As you said, September is National  
7 Preparedness month. So, I thank you Madame Chair and  
8 the Committee Members and the City Council for  
9 convening this timely hearing that sheds light on how  
10 we are prepared to ensure older New Yorkers continue  
11 to access much needed services during weather related  
12 emergencies. Given the impact of climate change, we  
13 all undoubtable believe that weather conditions may  
14 become more frequent and more severe in the future.

15 Before I proceed with the cooling center  
16 testimony and detailing the steps taken and some of  
17 the lessons learned this past July and August, I ask  
18 that you allow me just a few seconds, the opportunity  
19 to provide an update on the air conditioning,  
20 installations, repairs and improvement at DFTA sites.

21 Thank you for your advocacy to the Mayor, DFTA  
22 received \$4 million in baseline funding to help with  
23 these much-needed repairs. Before I became  
24 Commissioner, there were approximately 34 sites that  
25 required air conditioning improvements. By late

1  
2 spring, that number dramatically reduced to  
3 approximately twelve or a dozen. And by July, all  
4 had some work in progress. As of today, I am pleased  
5 to report that only six remain in the final stages of  
6 repair or procurement, or in some kind of procurement  
7 process.

8 That being said, interim provisions including  
9 portable and window air conditioning units were made  
10 available if appropriate and when needed. As a  
11 result of these improvements and repairs, we were  
12 better prepared to face the heat waves that we  
13 experienced this July and August which serves as a  
14 great Segway to DFTA's emergency preparedness plan  
15 which includes cooling centers.

16 For the past twelve years, DFTA, Department for  
17 the Aging, has had a borough of emergency  
18 preparedness responsible for developing DFTA's  
19 emergency preparedness plan. An over-arching goal of  
20 which is to provide older New Yorkers, DFTA staff and  
21 the contracted service providers information  
22 necessary to help ensure safety before, during and  
23 after an emergency.

24 DFTA's emergency response plan consistent with  
25 similar protocol set forth by sister agencies

1 including New York Police Department, the Fire  
2 Department and others detailed procedures and  
3 protocols to be employed by each DFTA borough. Our  
4 Borough of Community Services, a long-term care in  
5 our active aging borough.  
6

7 During specific emergencies including heat, power  
8 outages, coastal storms, transportation disruptions  
9 and winter weather. It also includes a provide a  
10 local emergency response plan for each contract  
11 agency.

12 Before I go on, it is important to note the many  
13 tools the city employs to provide information to the  
14 public. Chief among them are Notify NYC and the NYC  
15 Emergency Management, the NYCEM lead Advance Warning  
16 System, the AWS.

17 During an emergency, agencies work with the  
18 Mayor's Office to issue press releases, update social  
19 media and provide information to 311 and send  
20 messaging. Notify NYC, the city's free emergency  
21 notification system has grown significantly since  
22 launching in 2007 and now has 770,000 subscribers.  
23 It has expanded to offer common notification in 13  
24 languages, American sign language and audio formats.  
25 There is a mobile application that has been seen by

1  
2 more than 80,000 downloads. Notify NYC is advertised  
3 through a variety of outlets including bus shelters,  
4 social media, ready New York events, newsletters,  
5 elected official and other means.

6 Registration is free and open to anyone with  
7 information provided through landline phones, mobile  
8 phones, instant message or emails and again, through  
9 social media. Having access to a computer in order  
10 to register is no longer required. Registration is  
11 also available by calling 311 and residents who  
12 prefer to receive the information through their  
13 landlines, which we know is a choice for many seniors  
14 have that as an option.

15 The AWS is designed to alert organizations who  
16 work with people with disabilities and/or access and  
17 functional needs to various types of hazard and  
18 emergencies in New York City. Emergencies in New  
19 York City that may affect people's independence and  
20 their daily lives.

21 Participating organizations receive public  
22 preparedness and emergency information intended for  
23 use by individuals with disabilities or access or  
24 functional needs. These organizations then rely  
25 through this information via email, text or direct

1  
2 call. And these organizations can do that through  
3 their clients as well as through other organizations.

4 As such, emergency information is ultimately  
5 provided to individuals through trusted preexisting  
6 conditions and specific to their needs. Often, that  
7 organization will play a role in that persons  
8 emergency plan, as they provide an essential service  
9 that enables their continued independence in the  
10 community.

11 During larger emergencies such as snowstorms or  
12 extreme heat, NYCEM the New York City's Emergency  
13 Management team also hosts conference calls with city  
14 agencies and large service providers to give them  
15 direct information and guidance to pass along to  
16 their clients.

17 Now, referring back to cover the course of the  
18 past twelve years, key functions of the Borough of  
19 Emergency Preparedness has been to raise awareness of  
20 possible in appending emergencies during weather  
21 related advisories, tips and guidance before, during  
22 and after serious weather conditions.

23 With respect to facing an emergency, a key focus  
24 has been on the provisions of alternate congregate  
25 food service, especially in the event of a center

1  
2 closure, as well as protocol for provisions for home  
3 delivered meals, case management and home care  
4 services. Briefly, I will just give you an overview.  
5 In the event of a snow related emergency activations,  
6 we advise senior centers to ask their seniors to stay  
7 at home and to avoid walking in the streets. This is  
8 fall prevention month, Fall Prevention is a key  
9 signature project at the Department for the Aging.

10 In anticipation of inclement weather and center  
11 closures, most center participants will receive an  
12 emergency food package that contains food for three  
13 days. For home delivered meals, when we have ample  
14 lead time, extra food packages can be sent with the  
15 last home delivered meals service. If we have less  
16 lead time, as is often in the case of emergencies, we  
17 can help ensure seniors receive extra emergency food  
18 packages. Moreover, meal delivery drivers are asked  
19 to report on the conditions of the homebound elderly.

20 During the summer, seniors are to be asked if  
21 they need to be taken to a cooling center. During  
22 the winter, drivers observe home conditions and alert  
23 their agency of the safety and health concerns that  
24 they may have. Additionally, case management

1 agencies make direct phone calls to access clients  
2 conditions and needs.

3  
4 We had what we believe to be a solid emergency  
5 plan in place. The plan, however, was put to test  
6 during the sustained multiday extreme heat emergency  
7 of this past July and there were several emergencies  
8 this past July and August. On July 13<sup>th</sup>, the city  
9 experienced a localized blackout in Manhattan that  
10 had a significant impact on a senior center in the  
11 Theater District, Encore Neighborhood Senior Center.  
12 Initially, there was no disruption of service or food  
13 damage as power was restored quickly.

14 On July 16<sup>th</sup>, however, when the Center opened and  
15 was in full operation, several participants and staff  
16 fell sick. It was later discovered that they were  
17 exposed to carbon monoxide poisoning stemming from a  
18 damaged exhaust system caused by the outage.  
19 Participants and staff were immediately given medical  
20 attention. It's not in my testimony, but the staff  
21 of that Center, Jeremy and the Program Director Jose,  
22 were exceptional in their response and immediately  
23 contacted DFTA.

24 The Center was immediately closed, people were  
25 evacuated and given medical attention. DFTA and the

1  
2 Center Director jointly engaged the Fire Department  
3 and the Department of Buildings to inspect the work  
4 and to reopen the premises. The outage impacted the  
5 integrity of a gas line. While the Center has since  
6 reopened, this program had to use a caterer to  
7 continue meal service for an extended period of time  
8 until Con Edison could approve and indicate that the  
9 line was fully operational.

10 Although this situation was unfortunate, it  
11 tested our emergency outage response capability,  
12 which prepared us for the outages in parts of  
13 Brooklyn later that week. Although none of the  
14 Brooklyn providers located within the outage zones  
15 were affected, we contacted each of them to ensure  
16 the emergency plans were in place.

17 Also, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the Mayor declared a heat  
18 emergency for Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, July  
19 21<sup>st</sup>. Once the heat emergency was declared, New York  
20 City Emergency Management began the activation  
21 process for cooling centers throughout the city.  
22 There are over 580 cooling centers identified  
23 throughout the five boroughs of which 249 were DFTA  
24 congregate sites.

1  
2       The city has a public communication and messaging  
3 process to ensure that people can accurately identify  
4 their nearest cooling center. The cooling center  
5 finder is activated the day before the centers are  
6 open. Also, prior to the summer months, DFTA along  
7 with NYCEM evaluates its cooling center locations to  
8 make sure they are operational and have visible  
9 signage in advance of heat emergencies.

10       Upon activation of the heat plan, DFTA along with  
11 other cooling center partners, such as NYCHA, DYCD  
12 Salvation Army and the Public Library systems work to  
13 confirm the centers hours of operation. It was  
14 during this process when DFTA began calling its  
15 congregate sites to request that they extend hours  
16 beyond their regular service hours where possible and  
17 to prepare for activation through Sunday, July 21<sup>st</sup>.

18       While many centers were able to adjust their  
19 schedules, some centers had certain restrictions and  
20 limitations to opening beyond regular business hours.  
21 In theory, a cooling center should be available to  
22 operate beyond regular business hours if the  
23 emergency requires it to make sure that they are open  
24 and to help the public alleviate the hardship of  
25 excessive heat.

1  
2 DFTA however, has no authority to mandate 249  
3 senior centers and I don't like the word senior  
4 centers, congregate centers to operate beyond regular  
5 service hours. Serving as a cooling center outside  
6 of regular business hours is not a requirement under  
7 existing contract, it is strictly voluntary.

8 This process not only revealed that we needed to  
9 reclassify DFTA's cooling centers that were not able  
10 to provide services on extended hours, but it also  
11 revealed that the partnership between DFTA, the  
12 contractors and their commitment to serve older New  
13 Yorkers in an emergency. It is not as congruent as  
14 one would like to think or expect.

15 It took an enormous amount of staff time to  
16 engage and enroll a number of service providers to  
17 open beyond regular service hours. It was during  
18 this protracted engagement process that we were able  
19 to identify several impediments and varies to opening  
20 many cooling centers. Again, beyond extended hours  
21 for weekends and holidays.

22 I want to emphasize that the cooling centers on  
23 Friday during the day, the 249 centers, served about  
24 23,000 individuals during those regular hours. I  
25 will give you the numbers for the extended hours at a

1  
2 later point in the testimony. However, we realized  
3 that there were religious observation limitations and  
4 also leasing arrangements and occupancy arrangements,  
5 which ultimately precluded or barred a number of  
6 centers from opening.

7 As a result, 49 of the 249 cooling centers were  
8 unable to open beyond extended hours and their days  
9 of operations for weekend. We adjusted their  
10 schedules on the cooling center finder accordingly.  
11 It was encouraging that 100 contractors immediately  
12 responded and said that they would be open for  
13 extended hours on Friday and would open again  
14 Saturdays and Sunday.

15 With that said, as we got closer to Friday as a  
16 new Commissioner I was dismayed and concerned that  
17 many providers had not responded to our calls or  
18 emails. I then wrote a letter to all the contractors  
19 asking that they reconsider and inform us of the  
20 limitations that prevented them opening and that we  
21 would work with them to mitigate some of those  
22 impediments, such as staff overtime, limited staff,  
23 refreshment costs.

24 In that same letter, I reminded them of their  
25 professional obligations and commitment to the

1 quality of life of New York's older population.

2 After sending the letter, I also reached out to some  
3 of our umbrella organizations including LiveON New  
4 York and United Neighborhood Houses to assist us in  
5 our outreach efforts and to encourage the respective  
6 members to open during this extreme heat emergency;  
7 this was unprecedented. Both responded immediately  
8 and I want to personally thank Allison and Susan for  
9 their partnership.  
10

11 It's worth noting that NYCEM also provided and  
12 was an incredible partner because they gave us staff  
13 supports through the community emergency response  
14 teams in cases for those centers where we had staff  
15 shortages, which prevented the center from opening.  
16 So, we were able to open some of them with that  
17 additional staff.

18 Moreover, NYCEM has graciously agreed to review  
19 and offer suggestions to our emergency plan  
20 provisions that we have made since the July incident.  
21 All that to say, that we are extremely grateful for  
22 all our partners including those service providers,  
23 contractors, that recognized the heat emergency of  
24 July 19<sup>th</sup> through July 21. Yet I was surprised and  
25 disappointed - I am sorry, I lost my place. Yet I

1  
2 was surprised and disappointed by the service  
3 providers who were reluctant to open and required a  
4 call from me or our chief operating officer or senior  
5 staff to get them to reconsider. This is not what I  
6 expected as a new Commissioner from a network that so  
7 often is vocal and effective when they perceive the  
8 needs of older New Yorkers are not being met.

9 By Friday afternoon, the first day of the  
10 excessive heat, we had activated 138 DFTA cooling  
11 centers who agreed to extend hours. 114 were  
12 activated for a Saturday and 101 for a Sunday.  
13 Again, I want to reiterate that 249 were available  
14 during regular working hours.

15 It was also gratifying to see how the cooling  
16 center, DFTA cooling centers took charge. They were  
17 well attended and very active. And I am going to do  
18 an **animism here**. In East Harlem, I was invited to  
19 join a karaoke group, which I declined to make sure  
20 that they didn't leave it in a mass exodus. In the  
21 Bronx, the seniors were watching a Medea family  
22 moving which was quite fun, which we were also low to  
23 interrupt just with our greetings.

24 Despite the initial challenges to get DFTA  
25 cooling centers open, we were informed by NYCEM that

1  
2 the DFTA cooling centers that offered extended hours  
3 and days of operation on the weekend house more than  
4 50 percent of the New Yorkers seeking comfort during  
5 extended operational hours.

6 On Friday, again, beyond our regular working  
7 hours when we had I think it was 23,000 in  
8 attendance. On Friday for the extended hours, we had  
9 3,093 individuals attending. On Saturday there were  
10 4,688 who attended and on Sunday, 4,064 attended. The  
11 DFTA cooling centers as expected welcomed older New  
12 Yorkers but they also gave respite to New York City's  
13 families and children.

14 In closing, we are all well prepared that extreme  
15 weather can disproportionately impact vulnerable New  
16 Yorkers as the Chairwoman stated earlier including  
17 older adults far greater than other communities.  
18 This is why emergency preparedness and adaptability  
19 remain among DFTA's priorities. Emergencies by  
20 definition are unexpected and each vary in  
21 effectiveness, in intensity and severity. Lessons  
22 continue to be learned during each occurrence and  
23 plans are adjusted accordingly and because the  
24 current and future risk in light of our changing  
25 climate are significant.

1  
2 Strategic adaptation to heat emergencies is a key  
3 priority for the Mayor. We look forward to our  
4 continued work with all of our partners including the  
5 City Council to review and adapt our protocols to  
6 adjust to this new normal.

7 Again, I thank you for your interest and  
8 partnership in addressing this ongoing concern.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Commissioner for  
10 your testimony and we also have been joined by other  
11 Committee Members, Council Member Ayala, Council  
12 Member Rose and Council Member Deutsch.

13 I am going to start off with a couple of  
14 questions and then I am going to pass it on to my  
15 colleagues. So, if you have a question, please let  
16 us know and thank you Commissioner for your  
17 comprehensive testimony. You have answered some of  
18 our questions and now, you gave us statistics about  
19 the centers with the cooling system being repaired  
20 and now it's only down to six.

21 How much of the total budget has been used?

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't have that  
23 number because it's a work in progress, but I can get  
24 you that information.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, and then like, yeah, we  
3 want to know how much you are going to expect to use  
4 by January and also, we have heard from some  
5 providers that yeah, they have air conditioning but  
6 it's not that strong. Because you have seniors  
7 complaining that, you call this a cooling center.  
8 It's not that cool, so we also want to know like what  
9 is the — do all the centers know about the procedure?  
10 How they can apply for that money if they have issues  
11 with their cooling system or their HVAC system?

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You know, everyone does  
13 know how every senior center — I don't like that word  
14 senior center. Every congregate site and every DFTA  
15 contractor knows exactly what the procedures are to  
16 inform us. We have a close partnership to inform us  
17 of when repairs are needed or when a replacement is  
18 needed.

19 With that being said, we know that the air  
20 conditioners and the repairs required vary and it's  
21 so dependent of, so there is no one answer to say  
22 this could be done in five weeks, two weeks or four  
23 days. And it's because of the type of repair that's  
24 needed, the kind of location that it's in, whether  
25 it's an expense or whether it is a capital need,

1  
2 whether it's CBDG money. So, each one of those  
3 requires an assessment and a process, but the process  
4 is the same. They inform us, we then work with  
5 either them and their landlord to make the proper  
6 arrangements if they have a leasing limitation, and  
7 then we work through the budget process.

8 We have a team, a facilities team at DFTA that  
9 reviews each one of these situations to determine  
10 what will be required and then also reviews bids  
11 before we can actually commence a payment and  
12 installation.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, in your testimony, you  
14 also talked about that some of the centers got some  
15 temporary, where there is window air conditioning or  
16 some other cooling units.

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't know that this  
18 would have been a normal protocol, I think July  
19 taught us. Both us and some of my other partners at  
20 cooling centers, that this was an extreme situation  
21 and that there were two factors that we needed to  
22 handle, but we had alternate means of cooling. So,  
23 it could have been putting in additional window  
24 units. It could have been having portable units, so  
25

1  
2 that we try to mitigate the circumstances as much as  
3 possible.

4 But the interesting piece, of course, I am going  
5 off the top of here. The interesting piece was that  
6 heat emergency because we were concerned about  
7 outages, we needed to also moderate the kind of  
8 temperature that we were using air conditioners at,  
9 so that we wouldn't have a greater emergency on our  
10 hands.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I remember, we all had to  
12 like raise the temperature in the office.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right, we all had to  
14 endure 78 degrees.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: 78, the other thing that you  
16 talked about in your testimony was reaching out to  
17 the homebound seniors.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Have you gotten feedback from  
20 the agency that provide meals on wheels, their  
21 assessment on how many seniors that don't have air  
22 conditioning units or need to be transported to a  
23 cooling center. Did DFTA collect any of that  
24 information?  
25

1  
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We do not have that  
3 information yet, but we do know – what I do know and  
4 what I can say with certainty is that each case  
5 management agency and home delivered meal provider  
6 was asked to call the clients and participants. And  
7 as a result, they were able to then provide whatever  
8 was needed.

9 We have a provision within our case management  
10 agencies who deal with homebound elderly that they  
11 have additional funds to provide transportation,  
12 should that be required or any of the needs that that  
13 individual may have. If we could not for some reason  
14 transport that individual, we then contact the family  
15 and involve them in the emergency situation.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, is DFTA working with the  
17 state? There's a state home energy assistant program  
18 that some seniors are calling our office and asking,  
19 well, I heard that – I read in the paper that you can  
20 help us get an air-conditioned unit or some subsidies  
21 to help pay electric bill. Does DFTA help promote  
22 that program or is that –

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Eileen, do we have  
24 anything on that?

25 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: The heat program.

1  
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Eileen Mullarkey is our  
3 Assistant Commissioner for in-home services and case  
4 management.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, the Council will have to  
6 swear you in.

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, so, she can  
8 provide the details that I cannot.

9 COUNCIL CLERK: Please raise your right hand. Do  
10 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
11 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this  
12 committee and to respond honestly to Council Member  
13 questions?

14 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, I do. The case  
15 management agencies do know about HEAP and that's  
16 something they would discuss with their clients and  
17 they also have as the Commissioner mentioned, some  
18 special supplemental funds and if a client needed an  
19 air-conditioner that they couldn't get through another  
20 source, they would help them purchase it.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, can you share with us,  
22 like, in terms of how much additional funding that  
23 they do get? Because relating to that is, I was  
24 surprised to hear from your testimony that some of  
25 the centers didn't cooperated.

1  
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Everybody cooperated,  
3 it's just that I was stunned, the amount of person  
4 hours that it took to get people to that point and  
5 LiveON and UNH were very supportive in making sure  
6 that those numbers kept increasing.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But I think with that, my  
8 concern is the resources that could available. So,  
9 like in the next RFP for centers, we should really  
10 think about having that as one of the either criteria  
11 requirement or like, having funding provided, so that  
12 centers can offer extended hours for emergencies and  
13 other situations that might come up.

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Councilwoman, you are  
15 absolutely right. That was one of the lessons  
16 learned because we saw that that was one of the  
17 barriers.

18 So, in subsequent RFP's, which we will be issuing  
19 to; one for home delivered meals and one for  
20 congregate centers. We will put that provision that  
21 if you are a designated cooling center, that there's  
22 an agreement to provide extended hours and that we  
23 will work with you in concert to make sure that we  
24 can adopt and mitigate some of the concerns and  
25 barriers.

1  
2 That would be great because a lot of the centers  
3 probably could even open on the weekends, because  
4 seniors also or older adults could definitely use the  
5 activities or the meals or whatever and really need  
6 to expand the services and it's a great opportunity  
7 within the ORFP that we can explore that. I look  
8 forward to working with you and the advocates on  
9 that.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, so do we.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Diaz, I am  
12 going to pass it onto you to ask your question.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Thank you Madame Chair.  
14 Commissioner, good morning.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Good morning.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: You know, sometimes I am  
17 afraid to ask questions because most of the time the  
18 response that I get is, I'll get back to you and it  
19 never happens. But I am going to take the chance  
20 today and I am going to ask some questions.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, you know me, so, if  
22 I say I am going to get back to you; you know I will.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Castle Hill Senior Center.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Huh?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Castle Hill Senior Center.

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LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: The problem with the air-conditioning and the heating system have been for years and years and years. Every single year we call you, every single year we call NYCHA. What is the problem because all the response is oh, we are calling a contractor or a contractor will be there, but every year the seniors at Castle Hill Senior Center are suffering? When will that suffering end?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I can tell you that as I said earlier in my testimony, the repair of some of these system is quite complicated, because of the age of the system and also, maybe the location of the HVAC system. So, there are many factors that make it difficult and challenging to make those repairs.

I can tell you that Castle Hill is one of those centers that is being worked on right now and I can get you the details as to the status of it after this hearing and I will make sure that I give that to both the Chairwoman and you, so that you will have your answer.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Well, you know, as they used to say in the game of Throne -

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: What?

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: They used to say in the  
3 game of Throne, winter is coming.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, what are we going to  
6 do.

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Winter is coming, it's  
8 a guaranteed thing.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: My last question. In May,  
10 the department reported that they are aware fifteen  
11 senior centers with malfunctioning air-conditioning  
12 and indicated, the department, that these would be  
13 restored by the end of the summer. Have these cases  
14 been resolved?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: All of them are in  
16 process as I said earlier. That there were six that  
17 we still are either in procurement or six that either  
18 in procurement or are in some state of repair.

19 So, the goal was of course, to have them all done  
20 by -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: By the end of the summer;  
22 that's what you testified; the department testified.

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I know exactly what I  
24 testified. I know exactly what I testified.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Well, the department  
3 testified that they would be resolved the end of the  
4 summer.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: But now you say it's a  
7 process.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That's not what I am  
9 saying. I am saying that all but six were done and  
10 the six that are still remaining are either in a  
11 process of being repaired, are in some form of the  
12 completion process in some part of the completion  
13 process.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Is Castle Hill one of them?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, I can't answer  
16 that. I don't have that answer for you right now.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, by the end of the  
18 summer -

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: By the end of this  
20 summer -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Are you foreseeing that  
22 these fifteen Senior Centers -

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, by the end of the  
24 summer, you are assuming that the summer has not  
25 ended. I assume, I can say that not knowing exactly

1  
2 what the state of each one of the six are, I cannot  
3 affirm that that will happen, but I can say with  
4 certainty that most of them will.

5 I can get back to you with the state of each one  
6 of those and I can state at that time which ones will  
7 be completed by the end of the summer and which ones  
8 will not.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, you will get back to me  
10 on that?

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will get back to you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I am going to assume the  
13 status of Castle Hill.

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will get back to you on  
15 those two points.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I will love you more if you  
17 do that.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am sure you will. I  
19 will make sure that I give that to you, and I will  
20 also give it to the Chair, so that it will be for the  
21 record.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Thank you Commissioner.

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You are more than  
24 welcome.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Council Member.  
3 Council Member Ayala.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Good morning Commissioner.  
5 So, I guess, it's just really a quick question. At  
6 those sites that did not have a functioning HVAC or  
7 AC unit was an alternative location identified?

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, there were two  
9 processes right. So, there was alternative sites and  
10 we offered transportation. I have to say we offered  
11 an extensive transportation plan that wasn't used  
12 during the crisis of July and we also, if not an  
13 alternative, we supplemented by adding additional  
14 cooling functions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: And the second is not so  
16 much a question, but more of a I guess a suggestion,  
17 because having done, I remember having to staff  
18 cooling centers during the summer in my tenure at the  
19 senior centers that I worked in and finding it to be  
20 the most boring experience of my life, because nobody  
21 would ever show up. And I think that the reason that  
22 nobody showed up was because we could have done a  
23 million things differently.

24 One, we could have outreached to the immediate  
25 community beyond the senior center community which we

1  
2 typically focus on. Right, but we forget that we  
3 also have especially since most of the senior centers  
4 are sited in NYCHA facilities that there should be  
5 you know, an attempt to maybe flyer the buildings.  
6 At least even if it's just the buildings of that  
7 development, so that the seniors know that this is a  
8 cooling center site that they can go to but then also  
9 maybe in those cases, and I remember back then, DFTA  
10 offered some level of reimbursement if there was some  
11 sort of cost attributed to keeping the cooling center  
12 open. Or maybe offering a meal, right, maybe a  
13 dinner, a movie night.

14       So, some sort of activity that would incentivize  
15 individuals and make them want to come. Because I  
16 wouldn't want to come to a senior center either. I  
17 was just sitting there you know, in air conditioning  
18 bored to death. Maybe I am missing my [inaudible  
19 1:02:35], or maybe you know, like, things are  
20 happening.

21       And just finding creative ways to encourage  
22 participation, so that we don't have staff just  
23 sitting idle in cooling centers and no one is really  
24 making use of that resource.

25

1  
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I agree with you. One  
3 of the protocols that we do have in place is we send  
4 out a form, a letter, to each one of the cooling  
5 centers and ask them to submit to us after the event,  
6 the amount of staff over time. The cost related to  
7 that and other related costs, so that we then  
8 reimburse them for some of those expenses, number  
9 one.

10 Number two, I can tell you Mitchell in particular  
11 was hot and active that day. I went in there and  
12 said is this 78 degrees, but it was active, and  
13 participants were there, and it was beyond senior  
14 centers, but you are absolutely right. I was pleased  
15 to see how active the DFTA cooling sites -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I think that's because I  
17 think the Mitchell site is a good example of that  
18 because there's a connection with the resident  
19 association leadership, and so, what doesn't leave  
20 the boundaries of the four walls of the senior center  
21 via the director or the coordinator, leaves the  
22 Resident Association Board that then ensures that the  
23 rest of the development is also aware.

24 So, it's really nice right, because then you know  
25 people use it if they know that's it's there. But

1  
2 for the most part, I think there is just confusion  
3 about where is it? Can I go? Is it just for the  
4 members?

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right and I think  
6 that's a messaging piece. Thank you for that because  
7 that was one of our lessons, that we needed to  
8 reinforce that the cooling center was there for  
9 beyond the older participants. And so, that was also  
10 a lesson that we learned during this process.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Rose, your  
14 question?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Hi, how are you  
16 Commissioner?

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: How are you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Commissioner, are the  
19 cooling centers or heating centers open overnight?  
20 Do people sleep in these centers? No.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, no they are not  
22 open 24 hours.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: In cases of extreme  
24 weather, what happens to these seniors that you know,  
25 now need somewhere to stay because the temperature in

1  
2 their home still hasn't either cooled down or in the  
3 wintertime, they don't have heat. So, do we have any  
4 centers that are available for over night stays?

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: None of the DFTA 249  
6 facilities are open 24 hours. Those who agreed to  
7 have extended hours, most of those were until about  
8 eight o'clock in the evening.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Eight o'clock, and then you  
10 provide transportation back to their homes. Well, I  
11 am getting ahead of myself. You know, I am wondering  
12 what's being done to address the cooling and heating  
13 deserts in the city? You know, for example, there  
14 are not some cooling or heating centers in some  
15 communities, Staten Island is one of those areas  
16 where there is a great bit of distance between  
17 identified cooling centers and the whole communities.

18 So, what is done in that case? Is there a bus  
19 provided? And even in some of these deserts, there  
20 are no identified senior centers. So, there is  
21 really no place for them to go. Is there any plan in  
22 place to address these deserts where there are not  
23 cooling centers available?

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I think you are  
25 absolutely right. It's something that we've been

1  
2 looking at with our partner, the New York City  
3 Emergency Management Office.

4 We're looking at that - we have the 249 senior  
5 centers, but we are looking at that in Staten Island.  
6 We know that transportation is a challenge and an  
7 issue. As a matter of fact, I was yesterday at JCC  
8 and one of the first questions that came to me was  
9 like, what are you going to be doing to give us  
10 better transportation. But I would turn to my  
11 colleagues at the New York City Emergency Management,  
12 so that they can talk about how we're looking at  
13 addressing some of those cooling center deserts.

14 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Good morning Council Member.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Good morning.

16 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, as the Commissioner said,  
17 we're going to be exploring on the off season how we  
18 can increase the number of cooling centers in areas  
19 of high vulnerability, high need with partners that  
20 might not be known to us right now. We're going to  
21 be exploring new partnerships and trying to address  
22 that need.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: In cases like in Staten  
24 Island, so where there are maybe not as many cooling  
25 centers and do you ever have a situation where the

1 volume exceeds the capacity of the cooling centers?

2 And if so, what do you do? And that doesn't have to  
3 just be Staten Island because you know, that probably  
4 doesn't happen in Staten Island. But do you ever  
5 have more volume than you have capacity?  
6

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Of all of the  
8 challenges we encountered in July and August, that  
9 was not one of them. The centers, as you well know  
10 Councilwoman in Staten Island are pretty large  
11 centers and so, we have not heard that at all.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Do you have any I guess  
13 clout with NYCHA to repair air-conditioning units in  
14 their centers that - is it prioritized? Do you  
15 provide equipment? You know, in that instance where  
16 you know, our NYCHA senior centers are deficient?

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's one of the  
18 longstanding issues. I wouldn't say I have clout; I  
19 have a great partnership with NYCHA and the Senior  
20 Centers and thank you to the Council and to the  
21 Mayor, we have the \$4 million to make those repairs,  
22 which is one of the things that Councilman Diaz was  
23 alluding to.

24 That work is in progress, so it is that strong  
25 partnership that we have established. During this

1  
2 heat emergency we all responded with a sense of  
3 urgency which is where we provided the alternative  
4 cooling units where the HVAC or the repair was still  
5 to far out to address it.

6 So, it's that strong partnership with NYCHA and  
7 the Department for the Aging that has been  
8 strengthening and continues to grow, because they are  
9 such a tenant, we are such an important tenant in  
10 many of those NYCHA systems.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And so, in an instance  
12 where it's just not remediable, you know, within that  
13 time - it can't be expedited, do you provide  
14 transportation to other centers then?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Should transportation  
16 be requested, yes. We do that and that was available  
17 during this July and August, the two heat waves that  
18 we experienced in July and August.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I guess the center  
20 personal would have to do that? I mean, it seems to  
21 be a no brainer that if the seniors are sitting in a  
22 center without air, that you know, the next logical  
23 step -

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, there's two  
25 things that occur that is important to note. One, if

1  
2 a cooling center is unable to service a cooling  
3 center because of a malfunction, it gets off the  
4 cooling center roster. Staff of the multiple  
5 agencies are in constant communication during the  
6 crisis, during the emergency and communicating.

7 You know, like, the situation has gotten dire, we  
8 can no longer serve and so, then we evacuate and move  
9 on. But then that center is then removed from the  
10 center calling list, so that people are not directed  
11 there erroneously.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And how are the seniors  
13 notified that that is now the course of action?

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The seniors on the  
15 premise obviously will be relocated. The public at  
16 large will be notified through the 311.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: That it's no longer  
18 available.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, they have no doubt  
20 about a cooling center.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay.

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, does that answer  
23 your question?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yes, it does. I just like  
25 to - I think that the public should know identified

1  
2 sites that – it should be easier to access. Not all  
3 of the seniors have access to the internet and that  
4 it should be – maybe there should be something  
5 ongoing, a list where people will know where these  
6 cooling centers are in advance of a heat or cold  
7 emergency.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: There is two things  
9 that I can say to that. One is I strongly embrace  
10 your recommendation that we do a better job at  
11 reminding each senior center to remind their  
12 community that they are a designated cooling center  
13 site. That is one thing that we will take up. The  
14 other thing that I think is important to state, is  
15 that NYCEM works very closely with each one of the  
16 cooling centers and there's a visible signage that's  
17 up not only during the summer months, but it's  
18 visible.

19 So, it becomes – I all of a sudden notice them  
20 right. It becomes noticeable what's a cooling  
21 center, okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: But if I am not a person  
23 who goes to that senior center, I won't know that.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I am saying that you  
3 know, for the general public. And my last question  
4 is, who inspects the heating and the cooling  
5 operating plants prior to these weather emergencies?  
6 Do we know in advance who is you know, prepared or  
7 online? If there's an issue, can get it taken care  
8 of before you know, that particular season?

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, I am going to  
10 answer and then I will turn it over to my colleague  
11 at NYCEM.

12 What we do in advance as - obviously it depends  
13 on how much lead time we have.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: No, see, that's my point.  
15 I don't want there to have to be lead time. I want  
16 to know what happens ongoing to ensure that  
17 everything is up and ready.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Ongoing, each one of  
19 the cooling centers is inspected.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Annually?

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Excuse me?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Annually or -

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, on a regular  
24 basis and still designated as a cooling center. For  
25 example, if Mitchell, which it wasn't that case. If

1  
2 Mitchell's air conditioner went down, it would be  
3 taken off the cooling center site. That was during  
4 the year or whatever, until that situation was  
5 remedied.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And someone would continue  
7 to monitor that until it did and so, we would know  
8 that it was either up by the time we needed it, or it  
9 was still not.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, alright, thank you  
12 Madame Chair. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Deutsch.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you. Good morning  
15 Commissioner. So, firstly, my first questions are do  
16 we know how many heat related incidents there are  
17 fatalities during a heat wave when it comes to senior  
18 citizens? And number two, is that does your office  
19 work with a medical examiner to try to figure out to  
20 see how many incidents there are in New York City in  
21 regards to heat related incidents? And, I am just  
22 going to go through my questions, because I only got  
23 a few minutes.

24 And, also, I want to ask is that you know, as New  
25 Yorkers when we have a crisis, we all get together

1  
2 and we all join together, so I always offer my office  
3 as a cooling center or during the winter months if  
4 people need to stay warm.

5 You have probably over fifty city agencies, I am  
6 not sure the exact number. How do the city agencies  
7 open their doors? Whether it's Department of Aging,  
8 OEM, their personal offices and offer that as a  
9 cooling center?

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, I will answer your  
11 first question. When — God, I am so sorry, I just  
12 had a senior moment. Can you repeat the first  
13 question.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Oh, sure. So, the first  
15 question is —

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Not a senior moment —  
17 bad girl.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Do we know a number of  
19 how many fatalities there are during the heat wave?

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you, that's why I  
21 went blank on it, because I don't like that question.  
22 But we don't know that yet. That is something that  
23 we would not look for, but we work with our partner  
24 agencies who work within the Department of Health and  
25 Mental Health.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, how can we figure  
3 out to see if there are any fatalities and this we  
4 know, when we sit at a hearing what we need to talk  
5 about. About, do we need additional resources? Are  
6 there zero fatalities? Are we doing a good enough  
7 job and does the agency or OEM work with a medical  
8 examiner just to get those figures? Because they  
9 would certainly know if there are any heat related  
10 fatalities.

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The Department for the  
12 Aging - I am responding from our perspective. The  
13 Department for the Aging does not use that  
14 information or seek that information. We would then  
15 rely on our sister agencies to do that and you may  
16 want to answer how you collect that emergency related  
17 data.

18 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Good morning Councilman.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Good morning.

20 EILEEN MULLARKEY: The Department of Health and  
21 office of Chief Medical Examiner release that  
22 information each summers information around November.  
23 They need to do a little bit more examining and they  
24 make sure that if there was deaths during the summer,  
25 they try to really make sure that we're not

1  
2 exacerbating factors that made it not a heat related  
3 death.

4 So, they come out with that data in November  
5 every year.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, every year, you get  
7 those numbers and what were the numbers for like  
8 let's say the summer of 2018?

9 EILEEN MULLARKEY: I don't have those numbers,  
10 but I can get them for you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Okay great, okay, and  
12 also, I would also like to know for this past heat  
13 wave with all the power outages and everything going  
14 on.

15 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, we can get that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And that was my first  
17 part. And then the second part is that how are city  
18 agencies setting an example of others because since  
19 we can't get sometimes these congregate centers to  
20 open up; we can't force them to open up after hours.

21 So, how are city agencies opening their personal  
22 doors and asking their staff to volunteer their time  
23 if need be?

24 EILEEN MULLARKEY: That's a great question and I  
25 also wanted to make a point to the Councilwoman's

1  
2 question earlier. Because we work with such a wide  
3 variety of partners, we do actually have coverage  
4 seven days a week. Not as high as we do during  
5 Monday through Friday business hours, but because we  
6 work with organizations like Department for Youth and  
7 Community Development. They actually operate their  
8 cooling centers until 11 p.m. at night.

9       So, between DFTA, which runs a little on the  
10 earlier side and then DYCD which runs on the later  
11 side, we do have coverage usually from 8 a.m. to 11  
12 p.m. Monday through Friday and sometimes on the  
13 weekends.

14       During the extreme heat of this past summer of  
15 July, we did have some city agencies that opened  
16 their lobbies to allow people to come in for cooling.  
17 We did not find that those were very well utilized at  
18 all. We find and I think the Commissioner has really  
19 alluded to this in her testimony. We find that  
20 agencies and organizations that are already based in  
21 the community that offer wrap around services, that  
22 offer movies, or meals or activities, really have a  
23 much higher success rate at getting people to come in  
24 and be cool.

1  
2           So, although we have had great success getting  
3 our agency partners to open their doors during  
4 extreme heat emergencies, we don't find that they're  
5 as desirable to most people who are looking to get  
6 cool as an existing program in the neighborhood.

7           But Council Member, to your point, we are always  
8 appreciative when an elected official will open their  
9 office and we're very happy to work with you if you  
10 chose to open your office on those days, to make sure  
11 that that message gets out to the community.

12           COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, can you send  
13 me a list of those agencies that open the doors, and  
14 do you know why they are not utilized?

15           EILEEN MULLARKEY: So, this was, and I want to be  
16 clear that this was just in relation to this past,  
17 this extreme heat, the July extreme heat, which was  
18 one of the worst we've seen on record.

19           We had - I think DECAS opened their lobby, I  
20 think OEM, NYCEM opened our lobbies.

21           COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: If you don't mind, if  
22 you could send me the list.

23           EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, absolutely, yes.  
24  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And also, how many MTA  
3 buses working with the MTA and how many MTA buses  
4 served as a cooling center over those four days?

5 EILEEN MULLARKEY: We didn't use MTA buses for  
6 stand-alone cooling centers. We do use MTA buses  
7 when there's been some kind of vacate or a fire and  
8 people are outside of their homes and there is not a  
9 cooling center immediately nearby. We will use a bus  
10 while those people are out of their homes, but there  
11 not usually used as cooling centers day in and day  
12 out.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And why is that?

14 EILEEN MULLARKEY: MTA is very, very - they are  
15 one of our best partners. They're very happy to  
16 respond during an emergency but most of their fleet  
17 is taken up during the days by their routes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Great, okay, thank you.

19 EILEEN MULLARKEY: You're welcome, thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. I wanted to follow  
21 up on your testimony Commissioner. Can we get a copy  
22 of the emergency plan that you provide to all the  
23 service providers?

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Absolutely, we can do  
25 that. I just want you to know that right now, I have

1  
2 it right here, if you want. I will give you a copy  
3 of it. It's in draft form because of the experience  
4 of July and August, we're making some revisions and  
5 we're also asking our partner at NYCEM to take a look  
6 at it to make sure that it is aligned with some of  
7 the emergency procedures.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, yeah, Directory Conway.  
9 With OEM, I know that we have a lot of the Surat team  
10 and what I've heard from constituents in my district  
11 is that OEM is like combining a lot of the Surat team  
12 together and there were some - what I hear from  
13 constituents that they really feel that you know,  
14 they are located in specific neighborhoods and just  
15 by lumping them all together, to them, it doesn't  
16 really make sense or really help for them to really  
17 be able to work in their own neighborhood that they  
18 are very, very familiar with.

19 EILEEN MULLARKEY: I can't speak to the movement  
20 of the teams around from different district to  
21 different district, but I can say that when there is  
22 a big emergency or citywide emergency, we will  
23 actually Surat teams from other neighborhoods to  
24 respond to the emergency. And that's completely  
25 voluntary if they chose to respond.

1  
2 But I can get more information about whether or  
3 not there's been any restructuring of the districts  
4 for Surat teams.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, in my district,  
6 the Tribeca serve and now, it's like all together  
7 with the Surat in the low east side, they are all  
8 sort of like combined together and they felt like  
9 well, there are local issues and local emergencies.

10 EILEEN MULLARKEY: I hear that, I will get more  
11 information on that for you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, that's good. The other  
13 thing is that on the testimony, you also talk about  
14 770,000 people registered with the AWS, that Advanced  
15 Warning System. Are we working on getting more  
16 people signed up? Like, is every senior that goes  
17 through a center, Commissioner, are they all signed  
18 up?

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I cannot answer that,  
20 but we will look and see the way that we do some  
21 other benefits and entitlements, we can look at that.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And also, I am not even  
23 familiar, are they in multiple languages or people  
24 can sign up for different languages?

1  
2 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, yes, Council Member and  
3 for Advanced Warning System, the idea of Advanced  
4 Warning unlike Notify NYC which goes directly to a  
5 subscriber. Advanced Warning System is designed to  
6 go to a service provider that provides services to  
7 the elderly or people with access and functional  
8 needs.

9 So that the provider can tailor that message and  
10 get that message to the recipient in a way that makes  
11 the most sense to them because they understand their  
12 constituents.

13 So, not every senior would be getting AWS, but we  
14 hope that every senior would be getting the message  
15 through the senior center providers, through Meals on  
16 Wheels through a homecare attendant, through their  
17 doctors office, through any of their providers.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, the 770,000 are providers  
19 and not individuals?

20 EILEEN MULLARKEY: That's correct. No, sorry,  
21 the number you are quoting is Notify NYC.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, Notify NYC, okay.

23 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Notify NYC individuals, I'm  
24 sorry.

25 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That's individuals.

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EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, so that is individuals.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so, yeah, so, definitely if we can work on getting more people to sign up, I think that would be great. And the thing is like, when do you issue the protocol – what's the protocol? Like okay, emergency is going to be happening for you to trigger the emergency plan.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Are you talking to me?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Like, you heard that the heat wave is coming and –

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I was going to say something glib, but I won't. We work in partnership with the New York City Emergency Management team and it's between when their offices declare it an emergency, of whatever the nature of the emergency is when we activate.

But in the interim, the contract agencies as well as our agencies keep sending advisories and tips and guidance on what to do during this whatever inclement weather it is, but the actual emergency is declared by the City and then we follow suit.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what kind of information  
3 does DFTA give out to the seniors about what to do,  
4 how to take care during an emergency situation?  
5 Like, during a heat wave what are the services that  
6 they can take advantage of? What should they do,  
7 drink more water, keep cool?

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's all of the tips on  
9 wellness during an emergency, wear light clothes,  
10 stay hydrated, stay in a cool area. We also give  
11 information with the Department of Health.

12 Information on what are some of the symptoms of  
13 extreme heat exposure and some of the steps that you  
14 are supposed to take beyond that. So, that's the  
15 kind of information that we will provide.

16 Depending on the emergency, we usually issue some  
17 guidance if it's cold, the same thing frost bite, all  
18 of that kind of information. So, it's tips on  
19 wellness and then some tips on what are the symptoms  
20 and indications, so that then we can make provisions.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, Commissioner, do they get  
22 it like in a brochure or a flyer, or there's a packet  
23 of information that the senior can post it on their  
24 refrigerator to remind them? Like, how do they get  
25

1  
2 this information? Does the center distribute it in  
3 different languages?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you for the  
5 prompt and I was given a nod that we do have these  
6 brochures and emergency preparedness tips that we  
7 give out on a regular basis. Not through our  
8 contractors, but we also have it whenever we table an  
9 event.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think you send to our office  
11 too.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you, you're all  
13 better informed than I am.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We get some of them. Okay,  
15 so, winter is around the corner.

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: As the Councilman said.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what is OEM and DFTA sort  
18 of planning and preparing for this winter? I just  
19 hope it's not going to be crazy cold, but who knows.

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right, well, we have  
21 our provisions in our plan. What we've done recently  
22 since the July thing, is we've tested some of our -  
23 we're testing our systems to make sure that our  
24 communication systems are in place. That our  
25 reporting systems are adequate. So, we're doing that

1  
2 kind of review of our plan and we will be prepared  
3 for this winter. Hopefully, it's something that we  
4 can prepare for.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, we were joined by Council  
6 Member Eugene. He has to Chair the Human Rights  
7 Committee, so he's got to go back to Chair his  
8 Committee but thank you for stopping by.

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And thank you for that  
10 age discrimination, new efforts. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, we're looking forward to  
12 the joint hearing.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what about prepared for  
15 next summer? I know that you are updating emergency

16 -

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am so prepared for  
18 next summer. I am so prepared for next summer,  
19 because next summer could hopefully not be as bad as  
20 this summer. There were lots of lessons learned this  
21 summer; great lessons, improvements and we are well  
22 prepared.

23 And again, with the money and our vigilance on  
24 air conditioning, keeping air-conditioners in  
25 functioning order is a high priority for us given you

1  
2 know, the experiences that we've had in the past two  
3 years and again, I thank you for your advocacy in  
4 getting that additional money for those repairs.

5 So, that is a work that never will end. It is a  
6 work that will continue, it doesn't stop in July or  
7 September.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, Commissioner, besides the  
9 249 centers, we also have a lot of NORC programs and  
10 then we have other centers that are funded by council  
11 discretionary funding. So, are you also providing  
12 those senior programs with the support that you are  
13 giving to the DFTA funded senior centers?

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Anybody who's in our  
15 system. NORC's are in our system, discretionary  
16 grant programs are in our system. They are not  
17 treated like red headed children. They are given the  
18 information; however, they are not cooling centers  
19 for a variety of reasons. It's usually because of  
20 capacity and it's also probably because of - there's  
21 just staffing needs, their own resources.

22 But they will and do have all of the information  
23 that we will provide, and we will be much better at  
24 ensuring that they get part, that they each have an  
25

1  
2 emergency preparedness plan which is not the current  
3 case.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, but also, I think you  
5 might want to think about reaching out to some of  
6 them because they might have the space. I mean,  
7 there are some NORC programs that are in -

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Some of them are in  
9 facilities, buildings that could.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and then the one that  
11 are the discretionary funding center. I mean, I  
12 visited some of them. They have a big space, so they  
13 are already going to be taking care of the seniors  
14 that goes there but they also could service a cooling  
15 center for the community close by.

16 So, we should reach out because it's still a  
17 volunteer service, but hopefully in our next RFP that  
18 you could put that in there.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, that makes  
20 absolute sense to look at them in response to what  
21 some of the - where those deserts may be, yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Rose, you have  
23 a follow up question?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I just have one question.  
25 What is the criteria to be a cooling center?

1  
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's the ability to  
3 house individuals with a facility that has adequate  
4 air-conditioning.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I mean, are there  
6 certain other amenities? Do you they have to have a  
7 certain capacity? Do they have to have chairs?

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Public restrooms.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: OCOMP is better equipped  
11 to answer that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

13 EILEEN MULLARKEY: That's a very good question.  
14 Our main criteria is that they will open to the  
15 public, not just to their constituents, not just to  
16 their clients during a heat emergency when we declare  
17 a heat emergency and that they have adequate air-  
18 conditioning, public restrooms, water available and  
19 staff available as well and ideally that they have  
20 something else on offer as well but those are the  
21 baseline criteria.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, do they have to like  
23 have enough chairs?

24 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, we would like it to be a  
25 comfortable welcoming place that someone could come

1  
2 in and relax and not just an empty room. But our  
3 main thing is that they will open their doors to  
4 anyone and that they will provide a cool, safe space  
5 for someone.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And do they have to provide  
7 some kind of meal or snack?

8 EILEEN MULLARKEY: They do not, that's not one of  
9 the criteria. It's an added benefit definitely but  
10 water is something we do ask them to have provided,  
11 either from a water -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, just sort of a passive  
13 space where at least they can have a chair.

14 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, correct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Alright, thank you, thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I just have a final  
18 couple of questions. Commissioner, will you share  
19 the data on the cooling center attendance with us?

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, sure, I have it and  
21 I could probably provide it to you as a sheet that  
22 you can enter it to the - So, on Friday, I can tell  
23 you during the emergencies okay.

24 On Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, during regular working  
25 hours, we had 21,209 people in attendance. During

1  
2 extended hours, we had 3,093 people, for a total of  
3 24,302 people in attendance at the DFTA cooling  
4 centers. For Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup>, we had 4,688 in  
5 attendance. For Sunday the 21<sup>st</sup>, we had 4,064 in  
6 attendance. Again, for the August heat wave, on  
7 August 16<sup>th</sup>, during regular business hours, we had  
8 22,293 in attendance and then for the extended hours  
9 that Friday, there was 1,801 for a total of 24,094.  
10 I can give you this.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, if you can give us a  
12 chart and it would be great if you could break it  
13 down in terms of the senior centers that are cooling  
14 centers.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: This is only senior  
16 center information.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, you have the  
18 total.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The total is 100,963.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, but I think we wanted to  
21 also see in terms of the senior centers themselves,  
22 what is each one that is a cooling center, their  
23 attendance.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, broken down by 138  
25 or something like that, is that what you want? Okay,

1  
2 we can get that to you. That will take a little  
3 longer.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, that's fine, but it  
5 would be great for us to see in terms of where the  
6 most attendance and then maybe we can work with you  
7 on doing more outreach in the Council's district, if  
8 those centers are located in Council Member district,  
9 we can help.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Sure, right, but I can  
11 give you now what the total -

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And can you also give us a  
13 mid-year report on expense being pulled from the \$4  
14 million?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And lastly, Commissioner,  
17 we're still waiting on the food budget analysis?

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You haven't received  
19 the food budget analysis?

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, so I know you have been  
21 working very hard to get the money out the door. I  
22 know we have conversations, but if you can share the  
23 detail with us?

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Of course, we will. I  
25 totally - I'm sorry about that. I thought you had

1  
2 it, I thought – when you also met with OMB, but I  
3 will make sure you get that analysis, absolutely.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And you want the  
6 overall analysis. That's what we're looking for  
7 right? What was the formula and what was the premise  
8 that we did it on, absolutely. I am sorry that you  
9 do not have that.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, because we want to make  
11 sure that we're going to advocate for more, right?  
12 Make sure because we need more senior centers, right  
13 Commissioner? So, we got to make sure they are well  
14 funded.

15 So, that's why were very happy that you're the  
16 Commissioner and we are very happy that we will be  
17 working closely together to make this happen.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We will continue to do  
19 so.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, so thank you for being  
21 here and thank you Director and thank you to all of  
22 your staff. So, we are going to call the public  
23 panel.

24 Okay, Po-Ling Ng, CPC Project Open Door Center;  
25 Molly Krakowski, JASA and Katelyn Andrews from LiveON

1  
2 New York and J.T. Falcone from United Neighborhood  
3 Houses.

4 So, Commissioner, you're done.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm done, alright.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean, you're welcome to stay  
9 and here what the advocates are saying, but I know  
10 you have a lot of work to do.

11 Oh, Commissioner, you got to help get the senior  
12 center in my district Independence Plaza, NORC -

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I knew you are going to  
14 ask that.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I got some updates, but I  
16 need to have that center reopened asap.

17 KATELYN ANDREWS: So, I have been designated to  
18 start. My name is Katelyn Andrews, I am the Director  
19 of Public Policy at LiveON New York.

20 As many of you know, LiveON New York is an  
21 umbrella organization that represents more than 100  
22 community-based organizations that provide services  
23 throughout the five boroughs. Including senior  
24 centers, home delivered meals and the gamut of  
25

1  
2 services that an older adult might need to thrive in  
3 their later years.

4 As the Commissioner mentioned and we discussed  
5 thoroughly, in the event of a heat wave or extreme  
6 winter weather, the city has designated a number of  
7 haven's to which an older adult can escape. Some of  
8 these are located in NYCHA community centers or  
9 senior centers throughout the five boroughs.

10 Many of LiveON New York's members operate these  
11 sites, providing heat or air-conditioning to some of  
12 New York's most vulnerable populations.

13 As noted, the community organizations are often  
14 asked to operate outside of their normal business  
15 hours, such as on weekends, their time off. In order  
16 to ensure that older New Yorkers without access to  
17 cold spaces are kept safe.

18 These organizations work hard daily to serve  
19 their respective communities and during bouts of  
20 extreme weather, their dedication does not waiver.  
21 LiveON New York would respectfully like to submit  
22 several recommendations to continue improving the way  
23 in which we protect older New Yorkers in the event of  
24 extreme weather.

1  
2 First and foremost, we want to thank the  
3 Administration and City Council for baselining plans  
4 in the FY 2020 budget to continue to make repairs as  
5 we know they will be crucial moving forward. We are  
6 especially happy that these funds are baselined, so  
7 we will see them moving forward and it's not one-time  
8 funding which is always a challenge.

9 Unfortunately, however, LiveON New York is unsure  
10 if the amount of funds that were allocated are  
11 sufficient to meeting the demand or if this demand  
12 will keep pace in the coming years and to what extent  
13 capital needs come into play.

14 To this end, we recommend that the Department for  
15 the Aging publicly report on projected infrastructure  
16 related expenses and capital needs over the next ten  
17 years. While this is some ways reflected in DFTA's  
18 capital plan, more could be done to survey, outline,  
19 articulate and prepare for expected needs.

20 For example, many and this is outside of my  
21 written testimony. Many senior centers could  
22 probably tell you that HVAC is just barely hanging on  
23 and it's very likely that there is going to be a  
24 crisis soon. I think that there could be some work  
25 to be done to say in five years, we're going to need

1  
2 to complete replace this one. It's at the end of its  
3 expected useful life.

4 So, to the extent that we can do that, we'll be  
5 able to create a list that is more consistent  
6 throughout the summer where centers aren't falling  
7 offline midway through the year.

8 Additionally, as was noted by the Commissioner,  
9 climate change will only continue to produce these  
10 bouts of extreme weather. So, we encourage continued  
11 efforts by DFTA and the Mayor's Office of Emergency  
12 Management and other agencies to coordinate  
13 communication and support warming and cooling centers  
14 as well as the older adults they seek to serve.

15 Finally, the agencies must consider and clearly  
16 indicate in advance of emergency situations what  
17 additional supports are reimbursable for  
18 organizations acting as cooling centers. Especially  
19 when they're acting outside of the normal course of  
20 business hours.

21 For example, organizations must be clearly aware  
22 of the following or reimbursable at the outset of the  
23 cooling season, so they can prepare their staff to  
24 understand that they might be asked to step up and be  
25

1  
2 a resource to their community on a weekend or an  
3 extended hour.

4 So, the senior center would need to know, are we  
5 able to purchase additional food? Can we serve  
6 lunch? Will that be reimbursed? Or will that have  
7 to come out of our own bottom line, as well as  
8 additional staff overtime. Is that certainly  
9 volunteer or is that something that will be able to  
10 be added as overtime. I know that the Department for  
11 the Aging did make efforts to have these discussions,  
12 but I think a clear understanding at the outset would  
13 be helpful.

14 So, in closing, we emphasize our appreciation to  
15 both the Administration and City Council for your  
16 interest in this issue and we look forward to working  
17 with you all moving forward.

18 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Hi, my name is Molly Krakowski,  
19 I am the Senior Director of Government Affairs at  
20 JASA. Thank you, Council Member Chin and the  
21 Committee, for holding today's important hearing on  
22 protecting seniors from extreme heat and cold.

23 JASA is a nonprofit agency, we serve older adults  
24 throughout the greater New York area with a mission  
25 to sustain and enrich the lives of older New York's

1  
2 aging population, so they can remain in the community  
3 with dignity and autonomy.

4       As we finish the summer and inch closer to the  
5 winter season, JASA holds contracts to 22 senior  
6 centers. We have five case management programs, 14  
7 NORC programs throughout New York City, which puts us  
8 in a unique position to serve many of the  
9 neighborhoods and communities and over the years the  
10 Administration has turned to senior centers to  
11 provide the respite from the high summer heat. It's  
12 laudable action, too many older adults are vulnerable  
13 in heat waves.

14       In preparation for these challenging weather  
15 conditions there are often announcements that are  
16 shared by the New York City Department for the Aging  
17 through the media, stating that there will be senior  
18 centers open and people are encouraged to go to these  
19 sites rather than suffer the weather at home. And  
20 while many of JASA sites are open for extended hours  
21 on these special days, not all sites have the ability  
22 to provide this kind of emergency relief.

23       For example, a number of JASA senior centers are  
24 located in New York City Housing Authority  
25 facilities. Currently, two of JASA's NYCHA based

1  
2 senior centers have HVAC problems that are being  
3 evaluated and hopefully replaced. On extremely hot  
4 days, JASA has used stationary air-conditioning units  
5 and offered programs in smaller rooms when available,  
6 in order to provide a safe environment to  
7 participants.

8 JASA also has senior centers that are co-located.  
9 One is co-located in a synagogue, which has  
10 inadequate air-conditioning and cannot serve as a  
11 cooling center. There is no funding to fix an  
12 inadequate air-conditioning system in a place like a  
13 synagogue.

14 JASA doesn't have control of the facilities and  
15 for regular programming, JASA has similarly used an  
16 alternate room with temporary air-conditioning or  
17 fans.

18 Some centers and this is not in my testimony.  
19 Some centers are also have contracts that require us  
20 to vacate a location as soon as the programs end.  
21 They may be co-located in a community center where  
22 the afternoon programming is for youth. We can have  
23 no late nights, no weekends.

24 There are other housing entities that participate  
25 in a New York City program to reduce energy. An

1  
2 energy safe program and as a result, they're asked to  
3 illuminate the usage of electricity on certain days.  
4 And so, this also ends up conflicting with the  
5 ability to provide a respite.

6 In terms of communication, when DFTA issues a  
7 warning and suggests that older adults attend and  
8 cooling center, many older adults assume that all  
9 senior centers are open. It would make sense to have  
10 DFTA confirm the status of the cooling at  
11 participating senior centers to ensure that the  
12 listing centers are still able to provide relief from  
13 the heat.

14 An annual survey is inadequate to verify real  
15 time situations and although I heard the Commissioner  
16 say that they are regularly checking that, I'm not  
17 sure that that's in fact the case with all centers.

18 Often the decision to activate a cooling center  
19 is made by DFTA with a very short notice to program.  
20 Early DFTA communication would be appreciated to  
21 enable coordination on after hour staffs and sites an  
22 improved alert system to agency administrators will  
23 ensure that programs are adequately staffed during  
24 extended hours.

1  
2       And I will just say on that, that I know a number  
3 of the senior centers were directly contacted by DFTA  
4 as opposed to the agency being contacted to speak  
5 with the centers. And so, it creates a line of  
6 communication that can be complicated. Where a  
7 senior center is feeling very pressured because of  
8 where the call is coming from and it's not coming  
9 through the agency, and that creates some tension.

10       Finally, utilization issues; it was JASA's  
11 experience this summer that more individuals use the  
12 cooling centers on the weekends than after hours on  
13 the weekdays and we believe that this maybe related  
14 to an interest in socializing with peers, rather than  
15 heat alleviation. And this was something that was  
16 anecdotal and we're going to be doing our own  
17 survey's.

18       We suggest that DFTA prepare, distribute and  
19 analyze the findings of a survey that they may create  
20 that would help clarify the needs and preferences and  
21 inform on expanded program planning.

22       Another issue worth exploring is whether clients  
23 of case management programs would use cooling centers  
24 if transportation or an escort were available. She  
25 said that many did not use transportation, but I'm

1  
2 not sure how it's been described to clients or to  
3 programs and agencies in terms of use of  
4 transportation dollars to transport the clients.

5 And I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Can we just ask  
7 you a question quickly?

8 So, you have a copy of DFTA's Emergency Plan or  
9 all the protocols and what to do during a heat wave?

10 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: I don't but I imagine someone  
11 does and I'm going to find out when I get back to the  
12 office.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

14 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: I haven't personally seen it,  
15 but I imagine that we have -

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I assume that the  
17 provider should have it also because you run the  
18 centers.

19 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Yes, and I know that the  
20 programs have plans in place, I just don't know who  
21 has a copy of and how it gets reviewed. So, I need  
22 to find that out.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And as you said, earlier  
24 notice, I mean, they definitely don't have to wait  
25

1  
2 until the heat wave is coming and then you know,  
3 start issuing -

4 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: We all know, and we all listen  
5 to the news and we hear for a week about this  
6 horrifying weather that's coming. So, when it comes  
7 on a Friday morning for a Friday night opening late,  
8 it sometimes complicates things.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, but definitely they  
10 could start early.

11 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: And I would be interested in a  
12 list, if it's publicly available of how many people  
13 are attending different senior centers. Because the  
14 centers that we have with the most participants on  
15 those cooling days are sites where they're co-located  
16 in a building where most of the people live and where  
17 there is air-conditioning.

18 So, that's why I'm saying anecdotally, we've  
19 heard that it's more about supporting us, being there  
20 to socialize. It's a weekend program which is all  
21 wonderful, but not necessarily in some of those cases  
22 because people don't have the air-conditioning.

23 Maybe it's saving them money, you know, there maybe  
24 other reasons but it's worth exploring rather than  
25 assuming why people are coming to the centers.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, we'll look at the  
3 statistic that DFTA provides and then we'll share it  
4 with the advocates.

5 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Thanks.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thanks.

7 PO-LING NG: Good morning our lovely and  
8 honorable Chair Margaret Chin and all the City  
9 Council Members.

10 My name is Po-Ling Ng, I am very happy you know,  
11 I come over here to share with you what is our needs.  
12 Open Door Senior Center has really opened our doors  
13 since 1972, 47 years already. I am only director  
14 over there until right now.

15 So, I really understand what the need is for our  
16 seniors, but the point is I would like to use this  
17 opportunity to thank you Department for the Aging and  
18 all the public offices that support our open door.  
19 We fought for twelve years since 1993 to 2005. Then  
20 we can move to our lovely facility on 68 Grand East  
21 Landmark Building for more police headquarter.

22 But the one thing we feel the power of our  
23 community. We feel power, we get the really lovely  
24 facility. But the Department for the Aging talked to  
25 me before we move in and he said that, Po-Ling Ng, I

1  
2 only guarantee you provide a professional engineer  
3 and to maintenance your building with the DDC only  
4 five years.

5 But right now, it's fourteen years. Five years  
6 is gone but you know, since the 1910 we don't have  
7 anyone to take good care of our huge facility. So,  
8 that's why you know, we are suffering. The  
9 Department for the Aging don't give us the money.  
10 When we are facing any problem, I call them, they  
11 always say no money. They said that only five years,  
12 I promise only five years.

13 But you know, if you want to keep the facility  
14 good, me, is not the professional engineer. I really  
15 want to be the super lady and take good care of  
16 everything. But the point is, but I deny this  
17 beautiful facility in the wintertime, provide a lot  
18 of air-conditioning. You know, and summertime give  
19 us a lot of heat.

20 But I just wonder the Department for the Aging  
21 feel power over us and said that Po-Ling, you have  
22 the very best senior center in the citywide, you're  
23 utilization. But the one thing, no money, how could  
24 I run the program well? We are always over  
25 utilization but the right now, I just want to thank

1  
2 you our lovely Margaret Chin. She listened to us and  
3 give us some money.

4 So, not enough, only about some money. We need a  
5 half a million dollars to fix the heater, the air-  
6 conditioning and also our door is broken, our window  
7 is broken, a lot of things are broken. So, that's  
8 why I try very hard to get the bids. It doesn't  
9 matter whether you give me money or not, I really  
10 think I will get the bid first and let you know how  
11 much money I need. So, the senior complain. They  
12 said that Po-Ling we have a very lovely facility.  
13 Unfortunately, the one thing you provide a lot of  
14 different activity. The ping pong people, the  
15 player, they say that it's so hot. How can we play  
16 ping pong? Someone said that, I want to dance. Oh,  
17 so hot, how could we dance?

18 They always complain. I really understand you  
19 know, so that's why I thank you, the City Council,  
20 Margaret Chin or the City Council person. I know you  
21 are rich; we are poor.

22 Okay, I know you are really rich. You are  
23 powerful. All of you are powerful person. I am  
24 small potato.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We allocate taxpayers dollars,  
3 but I want to make sure, I don't know if anybody from  
4 DFTA still here. Okay, I really would like you to  
5 set up an appointment and to visit Open Door, because  
6 we fought for the money to pay for repairs and DFTA,  
7 the Commissioner said, you know, there is a  
8 procedure. You can apply, so I want to make sure  
9 that you work with DFTA and apply and get the HVAC  
10 system and really start evaluating the repairs that's  
11 needed. So, that you continue to provide a really  
12 nice facility for the seniors.

13 Because we fought for the money every year, but  
14 we got to make sure the provider, the center applies  
15 to DFTA to get the repairs done.

16 So, before you leave Po-Ling make sure you reach  
17 out.

18 PO-LING NG: But also, and our lovely Committee  
19 Chair, sorry, I should talk more. But the one thing  
20 we not only care of our clients and our staff and all  
21 the little persons, but the one thing you understand  
22 how hard for the directors job.

23 We deal with the Fire Department, we deal with  
24 the building department, we deal with health  
25 department, mandate come over two weeks ago to our

1  
2 center, they test our hot water. Hot water is not  
3 hot because the system is broken. It's directors  
4 job, yes. But so, that's why I said that please help  
5 me talk to all of City Council persons. Give us  
6 money to fix everything. So, I made everyone happy  
7 because Open Door really opened our heart. Not only  
8 Open Door, open our heart to capture all the little  
9 person and the senior. I don't want to abuse our  
10 seniors and also our staff. You know, cooling  
11 center, they said that Po-Ling, you have a really  
12 lovely facility. Do you belong to the cooling  
13 center? I said, yes, I am so happy, we belong to a  
14 cooling center but when the people come in, they said  
15 that it's really hot. What do you mean? This is a  
16 cooling center; cooling centers should be cool not  
17 hot. We don't need the heat; we need the air-  
18 conditioning.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, Po-Ling.

20 PO-LING NG: I respond to them, yeah, it's one  
21 thing you know that. But also cooling centers should  
22 open to the public, not only for our little person.  
23 When the people come in, they said, could I stay? I  
24 cannot deny them. So, that's why you know the one

25

1  
2 thing, the key part, give me money. I can resolve  
3 all the problems, okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, the money is with DFTA.

5 PO-LING NG: But right now, how can I resolve the  
6 temperature problem. I just you know, used my fund-  
7 raising money to buy some fans and some heaters. So,  
8 that's not enough. I really want you to give me  
9 almost a half a million dollars to fix everything. I  
10 give you the place if you want. Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, you are going to have to  
12 set up a meeting.

13 PO-LING NG: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, Po-Ling, thank you.  
15 Please se up the meeting with DFTA really.

16 PO-LING NG: And also, the lovely City Council  
17 too.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, we've worked hard for  
19 the maintenance money and we fought hard for the air  
20 conditioning money. So, DFTA will have to meet with  
21 you and work that out, okay.

22 PO-LING NG: And also, you could chat our  
23 director from the Department for the Aging.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We will.  
25

1  
2 PO-LING NG: We are over utilization, everything  
3 including we belong to the cooling center, no air-  
4 conditioning, we are still over utilization.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, thank you.

6 PO-LING NG: I don't want to abuse them okay,  
7 thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

9 J.T. FALCONE: Hello, thank you Chair Chin and  
10 the Committee for the Aging for the opportunity to  
11 testify and for your interest on this issue.

12 I am here representing United Neighborhood  
13 Houses, UNH. We are a policy and social change  
14 organization representing 42 settlement houses across  
15 New York State. We run 41 DFTA funded senior centers  
16 in New York City. Our members do and after the  
17 recent heat wave, we surveyed them to see what were  
18 the challenges, what worked well, what happened with  
19 the emergency roll out of extended senior center  
20 hours over the weekend and at night on the weekdays.

21 So, we learned that ultimately, the centers were  
22 well utilized, both by regular senior center members  
23 and new visitors from neighborhoods and beyond.

24 Programs appreciated the additional resources, like  
25 Gatorade, metro cards and offers to cover staff and

1  
2 refreshments. I do think that our members would  
3 agree with some of the anecdotal evidence that the  
4 centers were primarily being used as a social  
5 gathering space and that especially on the weekends,  
6 that generated a lot of the attendance.

7 Our senior centers that were able to offer some  
8 sort of programs who maybe had a little bit of extra  
9 general operating that they could put towards doing  
10 some additional activities. I think it vibes with  
11 some of the questioning that happened earlier, that  
12 offering activities, offering other things that might  
13 incentivize attendance can also help to turn out the  
14 neighborhood during the heat waves.

15 There were a few challenges that our members  
16 reported. The biggest one being that given all of  
17 the various agencies involved, we're talking about  
18 DFTA, DYCD, working with Cornerstones, NYC Emergency  
19 Management, New York City Housing Authority, DOHMH,  
20 there is all sorts of different agencies that are  
21 part of the mix and one big challenge that we got was  
22 that the information coming from different agencies  
23 wasn't always consistent.

24 So, there might be something that comes from DFTA  
25 and I heard the Commissioner talking about the number

1  
2 of person hours that they invested outreaching their  
3 contractors and I think that part of the confusion  
4 that we were hearing from our members was that the  
5 information that they were getting during different  
6 rounds of outreach didn't necessarily match what they  
7 were hearing.

8       And so, our primary recommendation here, I'll  
9 just jump right into it, is that it would be really  
10 important for there to be a clearly identified staff  
11 member at NYCEM who has the authority to sort of  
12 speak on these issues. So, it's really important,  
13 excited to hear about DFTA's updating their emergency  
14 action plan. But in addition to that plan, at the  
15 end of the day when the mercury starts rising and  
16 we're seeing the heat coming on the news and in you  
17 know, five, six, ten days out, would be weather  
18 forecasting technologies we've got now in 2019, it's  
19 great to have someone who the buck stops with them.

20       It makes sense for NYCEM to be at the center of  
21 that. This would be a person that could coordinate  
22 messaging, flow of information and they have to be  
23 like I'm saying, in power with final say because when  
24 there is not someone who's the final say on things,  
25 the information can get very confusing very fast.

1  
2 Another concern that we heard from our members,  
3 especially those who are in NYCHA, is that NYCA and  
4 DFTA, and DYCD are keeping separate lists. So, if a  
5 member reaches out to NYCHA to say, hey, my air-  
6 conditioner doesn't work. We need to be taken off  
7 the cooling center list, they might be removed from  
8 NYCHA's list, but they might not be removed from  
9 DFTA's.

10 So, making sure that there is a centralized list  
11 for anything that happens because as we know, with  
12 the aging infrastructure, especially in the NYCHA  
13 buildings but overall the aging infrastructure makes  
14 it very possible that especially when we're cranking  
15 up to max capacity here on the really hot days. The  
16 systems might go down and like you're saying an  
17 annual review isn't necessarily going to capture some  
18 of the last-minute interruptions to the air-  
19 conditioning that might come in or heating during the  
20 winter.

21 Like my co-panelists have said here, during the  
22 spring and fall, that person who would be the final  
23 say at NYCEM would be working to ensure that heating  
24 and cooling centers are prepared for when the weather  
25 emergencies happen later and making sure that there

1  
2 is especially like Katelyn had mentioned, knowing  
3 exactly what kind of expenses are going to be  
4 reimbursable. So, the plans can be made, the  
5 preparation, etc.

6 I also just want to thank the Council for your  
7 advocacy on the HVAC money. That was really  
8 critical. We've heard that DFTA has been able to use  
9 this, excited to hear the Commissioner speaking in  
10 her testimony about the fact that all but six were  
11 ultimately addressed and that's way down from the  
12 hearing last year where it was in the 30's that there  
13 were HVAC issues.

14 With that said, we need to make sure that that  
15 money keeps coming out. Like I'm saying, all of  
16 these HVAC systems are old, old, old and things pop  
17 up. Like Katelyn said, many are hanging on by a  
18 thread. So, making sure that that money is available  
19 for continued expenses because those are going to  
20 keep popping up. Let's give some to Po-Ling.

21 And finally, I would be remiss not to take this  
22 opportunity to address generally the needs of NYCHA  
23 community centers across the city. I know we're here  
24 to talk about cooling but generally, there's \$500  
25 million in capital repair needs across the community

1  
2 centers in NYCHA and the city. Many of those  
3 community centers are hosting seniors either for DFTA  
4 funded senior programs or just generally in community  
5 centers where activities are taking place and it's  
6 really important for us to be looking at ceilings  
7 that are caving in, sewage that's backing up and  
8 interrupting the programs.

9       If we were able to sort of keep that one money  
10 stream coming with the \$4 million to address the air-  
11 conditioners but also look at some of the recurring  
12 maintenance costs that pop up for nonprofit providers  
13 in these spaces and maybe some capital that could be  
14 infused into that that could address issues outside  
15 of HVAC.

16       That would be really important as well, because  
17 these centers are providing really critical programs  
18 as you know and during emergencies, we're trying to  
19 tap them and make sure that folks have access to  
20 cooler or warm, depending on the season. And so,  
21 it's really important that they're at tip top  
22 condition.

23       Thank you very much and Tera says hi from Denver.

24       CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Can you make sure  
25 you give us a copy of your testimony?

1  
2 J.T. FALCONE: Yeah, sorry about that. I will be  
3 following up with an electronic copy.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, one of the questions I  
5 have that in terms of the NYCHA centers, because one  
6 of the problems that I see you know, personally in my  
7 district, is we allocate capital dollars to fix or to  
8 repair and like the budget is so high. I mean, it's  
9 just so ridiculous to fix up a room or a kitchen is  
10 like a half a million dollars.

11 So, I think that we really have to look at how do  
12 we address the real capital costs and if there is  
13 somehow, we can get other city agencies to come in or  
14 work with the sponsors, nonprofits, so that we don't  
15 just have our hands tied. Because only NYCH can do  
16 it and they do it at such great cost, it doesn't make  
17 sense at all and it doesn't get done on a timely  
18 manner.

19 But the main issue is that it just costs a lot of  
20 money to get anything done.

21 J.T. FALCONE: 100 percent and we've heard that  
22 concern raised from Council Members a number of  
23 times. We've been actually working in coordination  
24 with LiveON and Daycare Council as the Committee  
25

1  
2 Space Coalition addressing some of the different  
3 challenges in these NYCHA centers.

4 One of the big things that we've been working  
5 with NYCHA directly on, is creating an authorization  
6 process for the nonprofits or for their peer city  
7 agencies to run those repairs. So, we actually have  
8 a flow chart right now that would be NYCHA's internal  
9 deliberation to approve and then monitor the progress  
10 of a repair.

11 So, if say, you wanted to address a concern in  
12 one of your local community centers, you could  
13 allocate that funding directly to the nonprofit that  
14 occupies it, if they're up to the task or work with  
15 their contracting agency to perhaps be the overseer  
16 of that. The roll out, there's been all kinds of  
17 different arrangements that have been discussed as to  
18 what the agencies could be and actually it would be  
19 really interested in picking your brains on what  
20 would be most effective from where you sit.

21 But definitely something that we hear and  
22 something that NYCHA is actually really interested in  
23 working with us on. So, we should follow up and have  
24 a conversation about it.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, we would appreciate  
3 that, because we do want to help with the capital  
4 repair, especially in the NYCHA centers. But we got  
5 to make sure it gets done and at a reasonable cost  
6 and right now, the cost is really too high. We  
7 wanted to help a center replace a stove. It started  
8 with a couple thousands and now, no, you got to fix  
9 the whole kitchen.

10 J.T. FALCONE: Well, and that's assuming that the  
11 kitchen itself was permitted, which for many kitchens  
12 it was not. So, now you get a contractor that says  
13 actually I can't legally attach this gas line. So,  
14 another conversation we can have when you're ready.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Well, thank you  
16 all for being here today and thank you for your  
17 testimony and we look forward to working with you and  
18 with DFTA of course, you know, we start the next  
19 budget. So, the advocacy starts and thank you to  
20 everyone for being here today.

21 The hearing is adjourned, thank you. [GAVEL]  
22  
23  
24  
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 1, 2018